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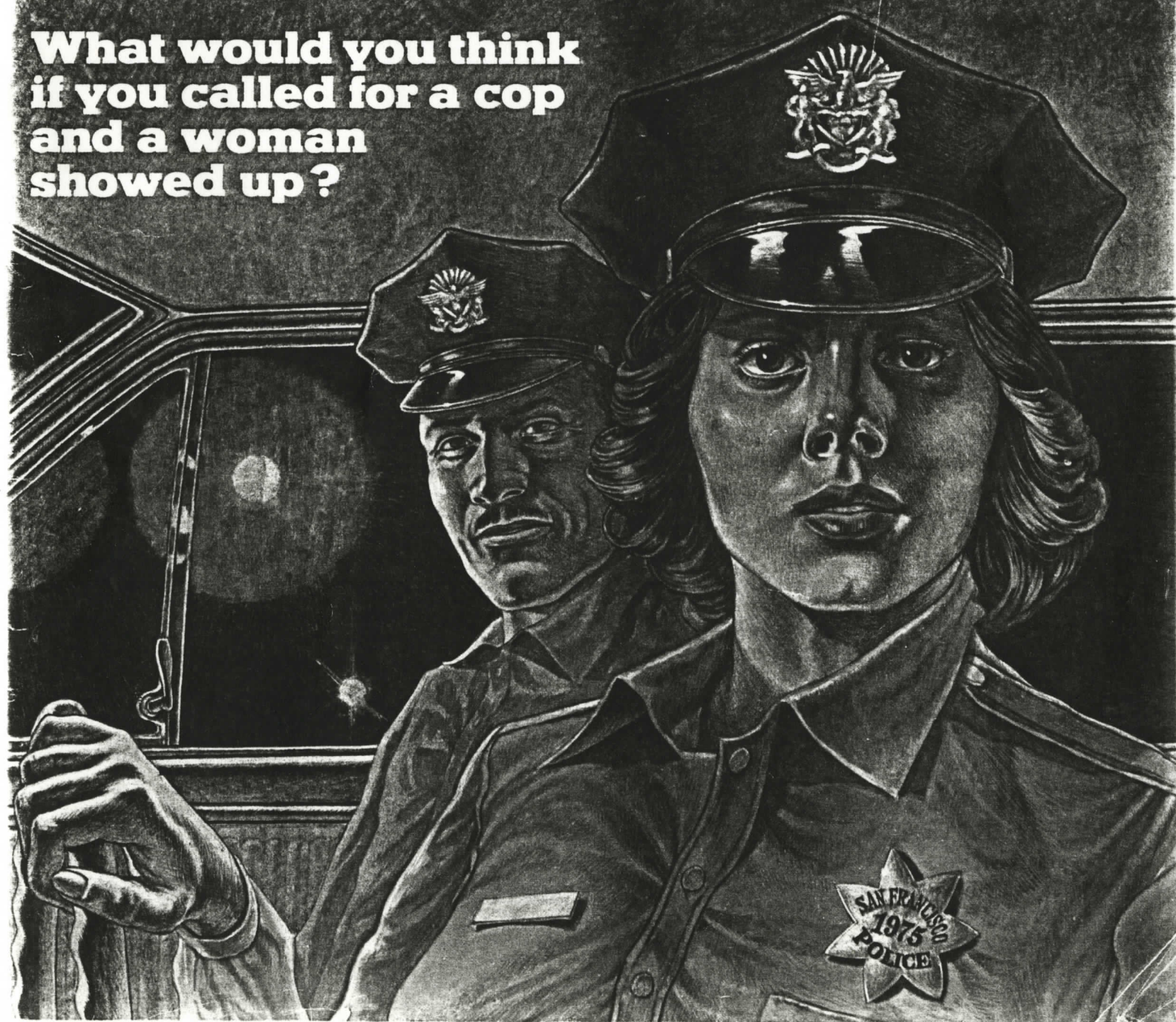
FOR SAN FRANCISCO
AND THE BAY AREA

FEB. 19-MAR. 4, 1975

VOL. 8 NO. 59 50¢

WOMEN WITH GUNS

**What would you think
if you called for a cop
and a woman
showed up?**



WOMEN WITH GUNS

What Would You Think If You Called For A Cop
and A Woman Showed Up? Don't Laugh.
They're Already In Training.

by Patricia Salino

AT the same time that I seriously began to think of becoming a woman police officer, I was also attending a yoga class. At the yoga session on Monday, it was a woman's voice intoning, "Hold the position for a few breaths, all right, let the energy flow, release. Relax." And on Tuesday in my police preparation class, it was a human megaphone bellowing: "PUSH-UPS! Get your butts up. UP! OK. On your feet, on your stomachs, on your . . ." I was living a Fellini movie. Which isn't too bad considering these are the '70s.

Months ago, suffering my secretarial job, I sang my job blues to two police officers on the San Francisco force. "Apply for the police force," they said. Did I know that there was a minority recruitment program set up to prepare candidates for the written and physical tests? Nope, I didn't. But I did know I was a member of a minority group: women.

When I first came to the Big City and applied for jobs with even a liveable salary (and we haven't come all that far, baby, as any woman struggling in the work force now knows) and saw them given to males, younger, with less experience than me, I . . . yes, I became bitter.

I tried to envision myself as a police officer.

Come to think of it, I'd never seen a woman police officer on the beat, on the street. I went to the library and scraped up

some information on pay, retirement and benefits, all of which sounded fine. But I had to prepare to be a police officer. The Minority Recruitment Program at the Police Department offered classes to help prepare applicants for the physical and written entry tests. They warned me that it would take work, lotsa work, and in this case lotsa sweat. Ahem, perspiration.

GETTING IN SHAPE: 'You've Lost Weight, Haven't You?'

My application was followed by a couple of weeks of getting into physical shape. I was offered an "agility" class.

Running around the parking lot.

Running up five flights of stairs at the Hall of Justice.

Exergenie. With floor and wall exergenes you grab a handle with a three-foot rope attached that passes slowly (stubbornly) through the genie mechanism. You pull at them from a squatting position or over your head and down to the floor. It is excruciating. The exergenie builds up endurance. Also frustration and marvelous primitive grunts.

Classes were originally scheduled twice a week, but soon I was spending nine to 12 hours a week, after work, working out. I became compulsive. Guilt drove me on. I actually came to feel I was blowing the evening by plopping in front of the TV or seeing friends. Instead of walking through my house, I'd skip

rope. In boring conversations, I'd take to the floor, putting in a fast ten push-ups.

Eventually, there were rewards to this regimen. A few friends began to notice: "You've lost weight, haven't you?" I always answered, "I must have," when in fact, I think it was just redistributing itself. Liberation or no, I eat up comments like, "You look great in those pants."

The classes continued and soon I received a flyer in the mail. There was to be a special meeting of women police applicants at Lone Mountain College. It was sponsored by COPS—Coalition to Open the Protective Services—a support group for women interested in becoming police officers, airport policemen, security guards, deputy sheriffs and members of other protective services. Organized by the Bay Area Black Women Organized for Action, the local chapter of NOW, and Officers for Justice (mostly minority policemen), COPS is committed to improving hiring standards in these occupations.

The flyer said the police physical agility tests would be discussed. 'Nuff said.

WITCHCRAFT: No Way To Train For These Tests

I was surprised. On two days' notice there were at least 150 women present. First on the agenda was a Dr. Beckman, sent by the Police Department as a special envoy to explain the agility test. But, he openly admitted that he, himself, did not understand some of the items, that there were no standards by which an applicant training for this test could judge herself, nor did he have any suggestions as to the best methods of training. He added that he knew there were some items of the test that women simply could not perform, in particular the "sandbag carry and turn" and the "six-foot wall." Witchcraft . . . we just looked at each other.

Then Bob Gnaizda, a lawyer from Public Advocates, a public interest law firm handling class-action suits, told us of a pending law suit questioning the validity and job-relatedness of the police physical agility test.

Of the 20 largest cities in the United States, only San Francisco's police force requires applicants to pass a ratable physical agility test—ten cities have no test and nine cities have tests measured on a pass-fail basis.

In 1973 the Officers for Justice convinced Public Advocates to file a suit against the Police Department and the Civil Service Commission on the basis of race and sex discrimination. After a year of hearings, Federal District Court Judge Robert F. Peckham recommended a quota hiring order (hiring would be limited to three minority placements for every two white placements until the police force was 30 percent minority officers) dependent on a series of hearings on the fairness and job-relatedness of the physical agility tests.

Court hearings, with the appropriate witnesses, were going on and would continue throughout our training. A new physical agility test had been created.

We were in the middle of a major legal controversy.

TESTING: Little Did We Realize They Would Burn Us Every Chance They Got

Despite Dr. Beckman and the lawsuit, most of the women were determined to overcome the obstacles presented by the police agility test, whatever those requirements were.

I don't think that any of us were really prepared, least of all



Alex Tavoularis

psychologically, for the struggle ahead. We wanted to be the first policewomen in San Francisco; they wanted to test us. We thought it would be hard, but fair. Little did we realize that we were treading on a true no-woman's land and that they would burn us every chance they got.

First of all the tests.

We began with an eight-and-a-half-hour written test, 65 percent of our evaluation, for which we took a preparatory class. It didn't really matter that nothing that we had studied in that class had anything to do with the test . . . the same thing happens to law students . . . let it pass. Besides, the test itself was almost fun. Put together by the local Minority Recruitment Program, it was experimental in approach; about 85 percent audio-visual.

But the hunker was the physical tests—because they were impossible, and unfair.

The tests currently being used by the San Francisco Police Department are a court-ordered revision of the original

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physical tests which were considered discriminatory by Judge Peckham and the Civil Rights Commission. Now, instead of carrying a 150-pound sack of sand up three flights of stairs, we only had to hoist a 125-pound sack onto a waist-high table; instead of vaulting a four-foot fence, we only had to get ourselves, in any manner, over a six-foot wall; instead of lifting 50-pound dumbbells five times with each arm, we were to use a "scientific device" that would measure the strength of hands, shoulders and arms. The new "fairer" standard was created by a Dr. Frank Verducci, a physical education professor at San Francisco State University.

THE STRENGTH OF A HANDSHAKE: What A Dynamometer Actually Measures

The most important part of Verducci's test was the squeezing of the dynamometer, a handle-shaped affair with a gauge to measure pressure. Each applicant was given a single try at this device, which accounted for 36 percent of her total physical agility test score. It was the single most important test any of us would take.

At least until the conclusion of the court challenge to this test by Public Advocates, the quality of San Francisco's future women patrol depends on the strength of a handshake.

And how accurate a measurement of strength is the dynamometer? Dr. George McGlynn, chairman of the physical education and health department of the University of San Francisco and a leading expert in the use of the dynamometer, testified in court that the dynamometer's accuracy is unreliable. Scores can be influenced by an average of 40 percent by factors unrelated to either overall body strength or even grip strength—factors such as the position of the hand, hand-width (affecting women in particular), and grunting while squeezing the dynamometer—which makes your score jump dramatically.

Then there is the mile shuttle run, wherein 26 round-trips constitute a mile. Dr. Joan Ulyot, M.D., director of aerobics and physiology at the Pacific Medical Center and a champion long-distance runner herself, has stated:

"It is my expert opinion that the mile shuttle run is designed in such a way as to be a very ineffective measuring device. By combining quick acceleration with many stops and starts, it neither measures speed nor endurance effectively."

Her suggested alternatives: To measure acceleration over short distances—a 50- or 100-yard dash. For endurance—running a straight mile, or a mile and a half.

CLIMBING THE WALL: Not Only Impossible, But Does It Make Any Sense?

But the gems of the whole test were the sandbag carry and the obstacle course (we called it "climbing the wall").

The sandbag carry requires the applicant to lift a 125-pound sandbag from a table and place it against her abdominal and chest area, both arms around the sack. The bag is to be carried ten feet, turned upside-down (it cannot touch the floor, leg or hips) and then returned to the table. The candidate is allowed a maximum of 30 seconds for this part of the test. She is allowed another 30 seconds to climb over a six-foot wall, slide under a crossbar, run through a set of obstacles, dive under the crossbar again and back over the six-foot wall. This course must be finished in one trial. Then she has another 30 seconds to repeat the sandbag carry and twist.

The most telling fact about these combined tests is that when

Verducci ran a pre-test sample on the obstacle course—using women who were above-average athletes—none were able to perform these feats.

During hearings on these tests, Dr. Verducci had a very hard time coming up with any scientific basis for the tasks required by his tests. He admitted that a 125-pound sandbag and a six-foot wall were chosen arbitrarily.

Ninety-five percent of his physical agility test is based on responses to a four-question survey from 155 current San Francisco patrol officers. Verducci had intended to restrict the test to physical skills that might be used by officers on patrol. He was to admit in deposition that it was difficult to determine the degree of physical skill necessary to perform the job, or whether the skill was in fact used, or if used, whether it was a necessary skill or a skill that produced a successful result.

The Verducci survey hardly measured up to standard job evaluation procedures. He failed to establish any objective definition of police work. All the questions concerned what the officers thought or felt about what they were doing. He did not talk to *any* women—policewomen, women in related fields, or otherwise. The surveys were not randomly distributed. It was more of a "Here Joe, take one of these things," situation. The questionnaire talked about "physical skills" as if there existed no other method of handling an emergency situation.

The four questions on the survey were:

1. Describe in detail the last incident in which you used physical skills during an emergency situation.
2. Explain in general terms the three emergency situations which required physical activity immediately preceding the last emergency situation explained in question one.
3. In the past three years, list in general terms each physical skill you performed during emergency situations in order of frequency.
4. Indicate total number of emergencies you encountered in the past three years.

When Verducci got the results he had to throw out questions three and four because it was obvious that the officers had not understood what he was talking about.

There was no way that Verducci could have come up with an accurate test from this survey because it doesn't include one bit of objective job evaluation. Instead it was an object lesson in job testing: If you start out with a bad job analysis, you can't possibly come up with a good test.

YOU'RE KIDDING': Male Cops Don't Rely On Brawn Themselves

In his evaluation of the responses he chose to ignore all information regarding the extreme importance of intelligence, judgment, and verbal skills as opposed to physical skills. He did not consider statements indicating that in emergency situations involving physical danger the chief skills officers used were *not* testable by physical agility tests, but instead depended on techniques like:

1. Verbal coaxing.
2. Twisting the subject's genitals.
3. Working together with your partner.
4. Brain over brawn.
5. Coolness. My number one and number two physical skills are coolness; vocabulary is my third most important skill; and karate is my fourth most important skill.
6. Judgment.



Courtesy of San Francisco Police Department

THERE ARE MORE REASONABLE TESTS: *None of the male cops had ever run more than half a mile while on duty.*

7. Caution.
8. Deception.
9. Walking.
10. Quick reactions and clear thoughts.
11. Surprise.
12. Alertness.
13. Use of foreign language.
14. Never turn your back on a subject.
15. Driving ability.

Apparently the survey was not taken too seriously by the male police officers who did respond. Indeed, Professor Verducci's survey originally went to 250 cops, of whom over one-third (or 95 officers) did not see fit to respond in any way. Many respondents did not answer most of the questions, or answered with responses such as "Unknown" or "Unable to answer" or "You're kidding."

But critical questions—like how much actual running is required of a police officer—were not answered. Of the 155 officers who did answer, not one stated that he had ever run more than a half mile while on duty. Many officers said that during emergencies, if they had to run at all (and most indicated that they never had to run) they ran an average of one to two blocks or approximately 100 to 200 yards.

TESTS THAT MAKE SENSE:

Over Half The Women Pass The New York Test

Luckily for us there are other, more reasonable, police candidate screening tests; tests used by police departments that have already accepted women. The New York physical agility test is much more job-related, and women have been much more successful at passing this test—as many as 60 percent of the women who have taken the New York test have passed.

It includes your standard sit-up as well as an obstacle course in which five yards of obstacles are dodged. A run through a four-yard tunnel. Scaling a four-foot vault box. A sprint of 18 yards. The New York simulated body carry is much more related to police work than its San Francisco equivalent.

The candidate runs up two flights of stairs, 26 steps, and at the top of the second flight picks up a 70-pound sandbag. Keeping the sandbag clear of the floor at all times, the candidate descends the stairs and runs back to the starting line.

Compared to this, Verducci's test seems like meaningless torture.

The fairness and lack of relevancy of the physical agility tests is something that can be legally determined. Court hearings are now going on which will determine a more

—Continued

reasonable set of standards. But other aspects of the problem cannot be decided by judge and jury. For instance:

Two street cops showed up at one of my favorite pubs one evening. (Every woman is entitled to a diversion every once in a while, even in training.) Casually turning away from my tequila sunrise, I asked if they would mind a few questions. As a candidate for the SFPD, I wondered what they would think of women on patrol?

After the faltering "ers" and "ahs" one of them finally got around to, "No, I don't believe they should work on patrol."

Me: "What other areas of police work do you feel women would be qualified for?"

Him: "Well, in rape cases they'd be good for questioning the victim, searching women prisoners and administrative work, clerking . . ."

Me (to get it over with): "and typing?"

Him: "Well, yeah."

THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE WANTED TO BECOME POLICE OFFICERS

Throughout all the madness I continued going to COPS meetings. At those meetings we discussed the real pressures under which all of the applicants had been working—personal and job pressures, the demoralizing aspect of the delay between tests, the slow legal process.

But despite these pressures, we wanted to be police officers. We threw stories back and forth about how our friends (men and women), husbands, parents, didn't understand why we *wanted* to become police officers.

We were becoming an emotional support group.

Besides providing social contacts, COPS was also operating as an information center and a political action group allowing us to evaluate our situation, find out what was happening with our program in San Francisco and in other cities and work out plans for action.

Some of the women were surprised and then outraged at the resistance that we were getting. Some were intimidated. Some were concerned that once we got into the police department we would not have a legal basis for challenging discriminatory policy.

We knew that even those big city police departments that accepted women often kept new women on station duty twice as often as new men. This prevented the women who did want to work patrol from getting the badly needed street experience. Should we challenge this tendency now, as part of our present legal strategy, or should we let it wait until its proper time?

And what about the strength bugaboo? Although a thinking cop rarely has to use strength in the course of regular police work, it is an unquestioned fact men have greater upper-torso body strength than women.

Critics argue that women are not physically strong enough to handle patrol duties—for instance, handcuffing a suspect. But handcuffing is a skill that can be learned, and there are enough martial arts training around—karate, gung fu, judo—to compensate for our lack of strength. The problem was how to make sure that we would get adequate training.

A POLITICAL IDENTITY: Supervisor Feinstein Likes The Idea

Most importantly, COPS gave us a political identity. Political leaders who wanted to improve the standards of the police as well as have women on the police force had an

organization and lawsuit to focus on.

Dianne Feinstein, president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, spoke at a COPS meeting and recounted a political dinner she attended where three members of the Police Officers' Association came up to her and said, "You know that you are putting your political career on the line." She had asked what they meant. "Because you're gonna have broads in there [the police department]."

She told them that she didn't feel that way. She thought it was good that feminists have paved the way for women's entry into occupations previously not open to them. In fact, she thought that male officers should be taking regular physical agility tests as well as female applicants. This idea was adopted by the class-action lawyers and they asked the court to order that policemen take the same physical agility tests as the women.

However, the Police Officer's Association, whose efforts have constantly thwarted the proposed gains of equal opportunity, fought the proposed court order that 100 randomly selected police officers take the proposed agility test. Judge Peckham denied the request, they appealed it up to the Supreme Court and they lost at every turn.

When the tests were actually concluded, the most significant discovery of this exercise is that there was no correlation between the performances of the patrol officers on the tests and their performances on the job. In some cases there was a negative correlation—men who had been evaluated by their superiors as effective policemen did badly on the tests, and men who did well on the tests were not particularly good at their job duties.

Our evidence was growing.

NOT PARTICULARLY GLAMOROUS: The Dangers Are Greatly Exaggerated

Eventually I became involved with the COPS steering committee—a group of female applicants and Aileen Hernandez, who has been the commissioner of the first Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the national president of NOW, and assistant chief of the California division of the Fair Employment Practices Act.

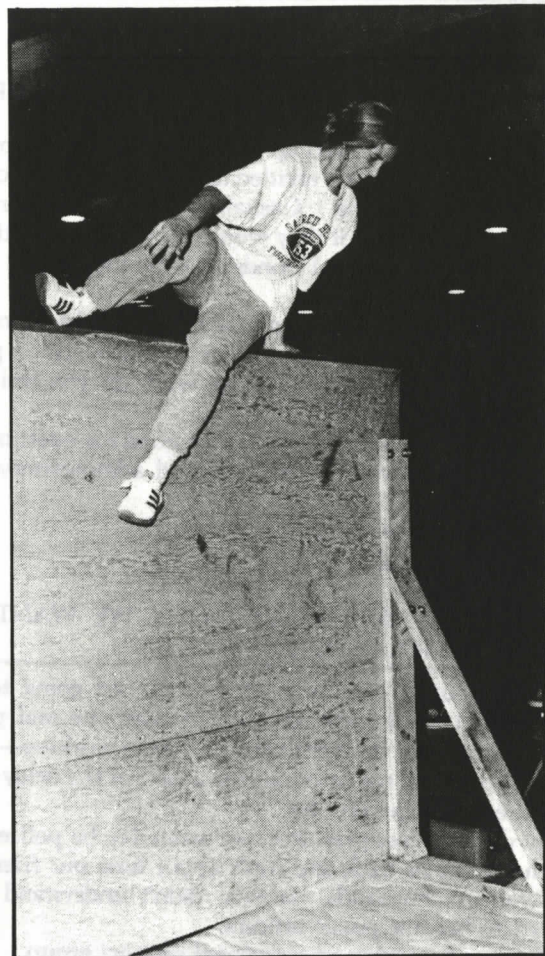
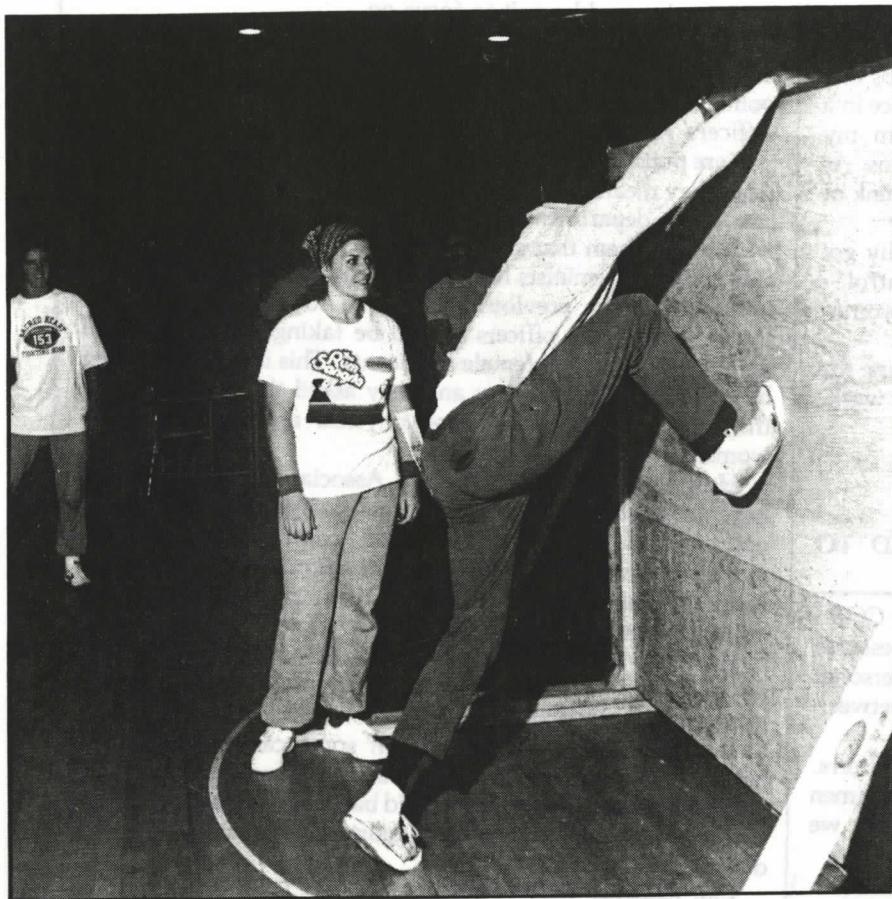
The general feeling of the group was that a "reality check" was necessary to weed out the women who came to the job with stars in their eyes, for the money, or because it looked glamorous.

The dangerous aspects of police work are greatly exaggerated. The average police officer in his whole career may encounter about one-sixth of what happens in one episode of *Police Story*. How exciting can it be writing out a traffic ticket? And it's not particularly glamorous picking a drunk off the street whose face is bruised and bloody from falling on the sidewalk.

It was suggested that applicants sign up for "ride-alongs" with patrol officers, and see some actual police situations. One of the applicants had gone on a ride-along about a week before and saw a young woman about 17 jump out of a seven-story apartment house. The woman had OD'd on heroin. This is the kind of thing that causes bad dreams, but it does give a realistic view of police work.

There surely was very little of our own experience that would give us a "realistic view" of what we were getting into. Until recently, there was very little objective information of

RAISING THEMSELVES TO OLYMPIAN HEIGHTS: *Looking forward to the day when her daughter will be able to start at police sergeant's pay without even a bat of a superior officer's eyelash*



Courtesy of San Francisco Police Department

any kind available on women in police work, particularly women on patrol. Now there is one study, organized by the Police Foundation to support innovation and improvement in policing: *Policewomen on Patrol*, published by the Ford Foundation.

The report concludes that, "A department with a substantial number of policewomen may be less aggressive than one with only men. The presence of women may stimulate increased attention to ways of avoiding violence and cooling violent situations without resorting to the use of force."

Their basis for this conclusion is that women are less aggressive than men. Whether or not that is true is up for grabs right now, but it is probably true that women have had a calming influence in difficult police situations.

The study also foresees that "the introduction of women will create an incentive for police departments to examine many management practices which are less acceptable now . . . that they must be applied to men and women alike. This may result in the development of improved selection criteria, performance standards, and supervision for all officers."

GENERAL APPROVAL IN D.C.:

Is A Cop's Career A Realistic Goal For A Woman?

Most importantly, the study indicates that the citizens and the police force of District of Columbia generally approved of having women on patrol and believed there was little difference between the performance of policewomen and policemen.

Police officers' attitudes in the study ranged widely. One commented: "Women should be used in places their bodies and

minds are suitable for—youth aid, station personnel, captains' clerks, administrative and morals."

A fellow officer recalled a tough situation: "I had a female partner in a beat car on a 10-33 [officer-in-trouble] call. A truck drive had an accident with a little boy and the boy's family began to violently attack the driver, coming at him with a hatchet. My partner and I and the first officer there all wrestled with the man in the family and finally got the hatchet. The policewoman stuck with me and fought like the rest of the others. She wasn't like those women—or some of the men—who'd run rather than aid a partner."

It is becoming increasingly clear that despite all the rigamarole, the hostility, and the red tape, becoming a patrol officer is becoming a realistic goal for a woman in this City. I look forward to the day when my future daughter will be able to start at a police sergeant's pay with not even a bat of a superior officer's eyelash.

And though I have been going through month after month of experimental training, testing, and class-action legal hassling (and will continue to do so for many more months), I am satisfied knowing I helped make those changes possible. There are presently 3800 women police officers in the U.S., but only 1000 on patrol. This *will* change.

I look back on the experience with a heightened sense of awareness, the exhilaration of overcoming obstacles, tangible and otherwise. As women, competing as people, we became aware of the power in our bodies. We became stronger—physically and mentally. Emotionally, we have raised ourselves to Olympian heights. □

